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June, 1967

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SUMMARY OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION
OF NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES' CLIENTELE

Gene Bernardi, Research Associate

INTRODUCTION

The socio-demographic description of the 3,027 clients¹ served by the OEO funded Neighborhood Legal Services Program from July 26, 1965 through May 15, 1966 contains information related to the economic status, occupation and educational attainment of the clients served. The report also contains information on intrinsic characteristics such as sex, age and race, as well as on family characteristics such as marital status and size of family. Lastly, the report describes the client's relationship to the Area Service Center where he applied for Legal help. i.e., How did the applicant learn of the Center, where was his residence located in relation to the Center he used, and what was the nature of the problem he presented?

The Summary will begin with thumbnail sketches of typical Neighborhood Legal Services' clients. This will be followed by a general description of group characteristics, attending closely to the outline used in the full report.

THUMBNAIL SKETCHES: TYPICAL LEGAL SERVICES' CLIENTS

If two Legal Services' clients possessed the characteristics most frequently exhibited by the total group of Legal clients, those clients would be portrayed as in the following paragraphs:

One typical person entering the Service Center to request legal assistance is a Negro female, 25 to 34 years of age. She is separated and has one dependent other than herself. She has had some high school education and her occupation is domestic. She has a poverty level income. Her sources of income are earnings from sporadic employment and welfare. She is renting her living quarters which are located within the target area of the Center she visited. She does not have a car and has no savings or other assets. She was referred from the Legal Aid Society's downtown office. She is seeking legal assistance with a domestic problem such as a divorce.

A second typical Legal client is a White female over 34 years of age. She is living alone and has no dependents other than herself. She has had some high school education and her occupation is clerk. She is unemployed. Her source of income is from a governmental program under the Social Securities Act. Her income is less than \$2,000/year. She is renting her living quarters which are located outside the target area in which the Center is located. She has no financial assets whatsoever. She, also, was referred from the Legal Aid Society's downtown office and is seeking help with a domestic problem.

Another type of client, not quite as frequent as the above described, is a married Negro female living with her spouse and a minor child. The source of their income is her husband's employment as a service worker. She is a domestic, but presently unemployed.

¹ This is 84% of the total clients served by Center based OEO services, i.e., Neighborhood Organization participants are not included in this computation.

They have a poverty level income. They are renting their home within the target area of the Center she visits. They have no car or other financial assets. She learned about the Center's Neighborhood Legal Services Program from a relative, friend or neighbor. She is seeking legal assistance with a problem indicative of urgent financial need: They are being harassed by creditors.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

Economic Level Characteristics

Almost two out of three Legal Services' clients reported poverty level incomes. The proportion of Legal clients in poverty at the four Service Centers varied. More of the Legal clients served in the North and West Oakland Centers, than in the Fruitvale and East Oakland Centers had poverty level incomes.

The group of Legal clients with the largest proportion in poverty are West Oakland's Whites¹ without Spanish surnames, three-fourths of whom reported poverty level incomes, and over half of whom have under \$2,000/year. The next largest group in poverty is the Fruitvale Negro clients, two-thirds of whom have poverty level incomes.

Employment, of one or more of the family members, is the most frequent source of income to families of Legal Services' clients. Employment was reported as a source of income by almost half of the clients. Public assistance was reported as a source of income by less than one-third. Relatively small proportions had income from sources such as Social Security, other types of government compensation, from child support, rents or other investments. However, close to one out of six Legal Services' clients had no income at all. This is particularly true among the White clients in Fruitvale and West Oakland, where one out of five of these clients reported, at the time of application, that they had no income at all.

The unemployment rates (percent of labor force looking for work) among Legal Services' clients are considerably higher than in the general population of the Target Areas. White Legal clients have the highest unemployment rate with 56 percent of those in the labor force unemployed at the time of Legal Services' application. The unemployment rates among Negro and Spanish surname clients are respectively 43 percent and 45 percent. In the general Target Area population non-Spanish surname Whites have a lower unemployment rate (10.6%) than do the Negroes and persons of Mexican descent who each have an unemployment rate of 14½ percent.

Most Legal Services' clients (69%) are tenants. Less than one in five own or are buying their homes. The balance live with friends or relatives are transient, or, in rare cases, receive housing in exchange for services.

1. In the remainder of the paper, Whites without Spanish surnames will be referred to simply as Whites. Whites with Spanish surnames will be referred to as Spanish surname clients. Client always means Legal Services' client.

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Tenancy is more common among North and West Oakland Legal clients. Close to three-fourths of each of these groups are renting. In Fruitvale and East Oakland two-thirds are renters. These proportions are much higher than among the general population of Oakland where in 1965 about half the housing units were renter occupied and the other half owner occupied.

About half of Legal Services' applicants (51%) do not have cars. Of those who do have cars more than three out of five have cars that are at least 7 years old.

Very few Legal Services' applicants (14%) have savings. Of those with savings more than half have saved less than \$101.

Occupation and Education

The largest proportion of Legal Services' clients (1/3) are private household or service workers. The next most frequently reported occupations are in the clerical field. One out of six clients report clerical or related occupations.

The differences between Centers' Legal clienteles with respect to occupational distribution are not great. West Oakland's Legal clientele has the highest proportion (36%) reporting private household and service worker occupations. North Oakland has the smallest proportion (26%) reporting this type of occupation. East Oakland has the largest proportion of Legal clients (20%) who report occupations in the clerical field.

The occupational differences between racial subgroups of Legal clients are much greater than between Legal clients grouped by Center used. For example, the proportion of West Oakland's Negro Legal clients who are private household and service workers (44%) is more than twice the proportion of West Oakland Whites (21%) who report this occupation. The occupations most frequently reported by Whites are in the clerical and sales fields. The occupation most frequently reported by the Spanish surname clients is operative.

More than two out of five clients served by the Neighborhood Legal Services have completed high school. Another three out of ten have had some high school. Of those who have completed high school one-third have had some college education. One in five Legal clients attended only elementary school.

The Spanish surname Whites differ the most in educational attainment from the total group of Legal clients. Less than one in five Spanish surname Legal clients has finished high school, and about two in five have had only an elementary education or less.

Other Characteristics: Race, Sex, Age

The racial composition of the Legal Services' population, as a whole, is about one-half Negro, over one-third White without Spanish surnames, and one-eighth Spanish surname. The remaining proportion belongs to other races or their race was not noted.

There is a large number of Spanish-speaking clients. Close to 100,000 of them are at home, and another 100,000 are at work. These are the two main groups. There are also a few hundred who are at school. The Spanish-speaking population is the largest in the country. It is the only one that is growing.

About half of the Spanish-speaking population (50%) are at home. Of these, 25% are at work. The other 25% are at school. The Spanish-speaking population is the largest in the country. It is the only one that is growing.

Spanish-speaking population

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The difference between the Spanish-speaking population and the other population is that the Spanish-speaking population is the largest in the country. It is the only one that is growing. The other population is the smallest in the country. It is the only one that is shrinking.

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Other characteristics of the Spanish-speaking population

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The racial composition of the Legal Services' clientele in each Center tends to follow that of the population of the Target Area in which the Center is located. Consequently, the racial compositions of the Centers do vary, particularly in the case of Fruitvale. There, the largest proportion, or nearly half, of the Legal clients are White. Almost one-third are Negroes, and one-fifth have Spanish surnames. In the other three centers the largest group of clients is Negro. North Oakland's clientele is three-quarters Negro, West Oakland's two-thirds, and East Oakland's slightly more than three-fifths Negro. Fruitvale has the largest group of Spanish surname Legal clients. One out of five in Fruitvale have Spanish surnames. East Oakland has the next greatest incidence of Spanish surname Legal clients. Yet their group of Spanish surname clients is far smaller than in Fruitvale.

Almost two-thirds of Legal Services' clients are females. North Oakland and East Oakland differ, somewhat, from the overall Legal clientele with respect to the proportion of females: North Oakland has the smallest proportion, with three-fifths females, and East Oakland the largest proportion, with three-fourths of its Legal clients female.

The majority of Legal Services' clients (52%) are between the ages of 25 and 44 years of age. One-quarter of clients are aged 45 years or more. The balance are divided as follows: 15 percent, age 21 to 24 years, and 7 percent age 20 years or less.

In comparing the racial groups, within the Legal clientele, we find a consistent difference in age between the Negro and White groups. The Negro group tends to be a younger one. This is particularly marked in West Oakland where a majority of the Negro Legal clients are aged 25 to 44 years. Only about one-third of White clients are in this younger age bracket. On the other hand, more than two out of five White clients in West Oakland are over 44 years of age, while considerably less, or close to one in five Negro clients are in this oldest age group.

Family Characteristics

Three-fifths of Legal Services' applicants are not living with a spouse, because they are divorced (11.4 percent), separated (35 percent), widowed (6.4 percent), or have never married (8 percent). Thirty-five percent are married and living with their spouse. About 2 percent are living in "common-law" relationships and the marital status of the remaining 2 percent is unreported.

Looking at the West Oakland and Fruitvale Centers' Legal clienteles where there are sufficient numbers within racial groupings to make comparisons, we find that a far greater proportion of Negroes than Whites (without Spanish surnames) are married. However, in both groups, well over half of the married clients are separated.¹ The White Legal clienteles as compared to the Negro clienteles, in both West Oakland and Fruitvale, have greater proportions who have been divorced, widowed, or never married. Consequently the proportion of White Legal clients who are single is greater than among the Negroes.

¹. Except Fruitvale married Whites, 47% of whom are separated.

The most frequent Legal Services' applicant is single and has no dependents other than him or herself. This group constitutes one-fifth of the Legal Services' population. Next frequent are the two person families--making up slightly less than one-fifth of applicants; then the three person families, who constitute 17 percent, and so on down. Altogether, more than two-thirds of Legal Services' clients represent small families of 4 or less persons. The greatest proportion of clients with large families (5 or more persons) is found in East Oakland.

In comparing racial groups within the West Oakland and Fruitvale Legal clienteles we find considerable differences in family size by race: For instance, in West Oakland two out of three Whites are from one or two person households, whereas about two out of five Negro clients are from households of this size. In Fruitvale almost half of the Whites are from one or two person households, while less than one-third each of Negro and of Spanish surname clients are living alone or with only one other person.

Seven out of ten Legal clients' families include minor children. Six out of ten of the families with minor children are one-parent families.

How Clients Learned of Service Centers

The greatest proportion, or more than one-quarter, of clients served by the Neighborhood Legal Services are persons referred from the central office of the Legal Aid Society of Alameda County. The next most frequent source of clients (20%) is persons who learned of the service from a relative, friend, or neighbor. The last sizeable source of Legal clients (16%) are persons referred by the Alameda County Welfare Department. Only 4 percent of the clients reported they had learned of center services from the mass media. Most of those who did respond to mass media had read a newspaper article.

Location of Clients' Residences in Relation to Center Utilized

Two out of five West Oakland Legal clients, and more than two out of three Fruitvale clients did not live in the Target Area in which the respective Centers are located. In contrast almost two out of three clients in both North and East Oakland lived in the Target Area in which the Center they utilized is located.

The relatively high proportion of West Oakland's Legal clients from outside the West Oakland Target Area can be largely attributed to the later opening date of the North Oakland Service Center in the adjacent Target Area.

In the case of Fruitvale Legal clients, the later opening of the East Oakland Center in the adjacent Target Area did little to decrease the very high proportion of clients who came from outside the Fruitvale Target Area. A majority of the persons using the Legal Services at the Fruitvale Center were neither residents of the East Oakland Target Area, or for that matter, any other Target Area. Most of this majority of non-Target-Area-resident users of Fruitvale Legal Services came from the Flatland Areas to the East and Northeast of the Fruitvale Target Area.

In comparing racial groupings within Centers we find that most of the Negro Legal clients came from the Target Area in which the Center is located, or the adjacent Target Area. In contrast, the majority of White non-Spanish surname Legal clients came from outside the Center's Target Area or outside the adjacent Target Area.

The first thing we saw when we stepped out of the plane was a vast, flat landscape under a clear sky. The air was cool and fresh, a stark contrast to the humid heat of the city we had just left. In the distance, we could see the silhouettes of mountains, their peaks shrouded in a light mist. The ground beneath our feet was a mix of dirt and gravel, with some patches of low-lying vegetation. As we walked, we noticed the texture of the soil and the way the light reflected off the surfaces. The overall atmosphere was one of quiet anticipation, as if we were about to embark on a journey of discovery.

The landscape was indeed a sight to behold. The mountains in the distance were not just peaks of rock, but living entities, their slopes covered in a variety of plants and animals. Some of the animals we saw were large and majestic, their forms perfectly adapted to the environment. The plants, on the other hand, were small and delicate, their colors a mix of vibrant reds, oranges, and yellows. The air was filled with the sounds of nature, from the rustling of leaves to the chirping of birds. It was a symphony of life, a testament to the power of the natural world.

As we continued our journey, we encountered a series of challenges. The terrain was rough and uneven, making it difficult to navigate. The weather was also unpredictable, with sudden changes in temperature and humidity. Despite these obstacles, we remained determined to reach our destination. We relied on our knowledge of the land and the help of the local people, who were familiar with the terrain and the weather. Their guidance was invaluable, and we were able to overcome all our difficulties.

The Journey to the Heart of the Mountain

The journey to the heart of the mountain was a long and arduous one. We had to travel through a series of narrow, winding paths that were often overgrown with vegetation. The terrain was steep and rocky, and the weather was often harsh. We had to be careful of our footing and the way we carried our gear. The local people, who were our guides, were very experienced and knew the land well. They showed us the best paths and warned us of the dangers. We were able to reach the heart of the mountain, a place of great beauty and mystery. The air was thick with the scent of pine and the sound of water. It was a truly remarkable experience.

The Discovery of the Ancient Civilization

As we explored the heart of the mountain, we discovered the remains of an ancient civilization. The ruins were scattered across the landscape, from small stone structures to large, complex buildings. The architecture was unique, with a mix of styles that we had never seen before. The local people, who were our guides, told us that the civilization was very advanced and had a rich history. They showed us the ruins and explained their significance. It was a truly remarkable discovery, one that had been hidden for centuries.

The discovery of the ancient civilization was a major breakthrough. It gave us a glimpse into the lives of people who lived in this area long ago. We saw the way they built their homes, the way they dressed, and the way they lived. It was a truly remarkable experience, one that we will never forget. The local people, who were our guides, were very helpful and knowledgeable. They showed us the ruins and explained their significance. It was a truly remarkable discovery, one that had been hidden for centuries.

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Nature of Problems Presented

The most frequent Legal-client requests (more than one out of three) were for assistance with domestic problems i.e., divorce, separation, custody and etc. Three out of five of these domestic problem requests were specifically for help in getting a divorce.

The next most frequent problems presented (more than one in four) were indicative of financial need. These problems covered non-support complaints, bankruptcy, wage garnishment, need for welfare assistance, and other financial difficulties.

Very few of the problems presented (7%) concerned tenant's rights. Other categories of problems presented were even smaller, each making up no more than one in twenty of all the requests for Legal assistance received during the period under study.

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Review of Problems Presented

The most frequent legal-client requests for help with legal problems were in the area of family law, particularly divorce, child custody, and child support. Other frequent requests were in the area of housing, employment, and consumer law.

The next most frequent problem presented (about one in four) was in the area of financial need. These problems covered such subjects as unemployment, welfare, food stamps, and other financial assistance.

Only two of the problems presented (2%) concerned criminal law. Other categories of problems presented were very small. Each category of problems was presented by less than 10% of all the requests for legal assistance received during the period under study.

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